



## **Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination CP1310 Agannygal-Ennis 110kV Overhead Line (OHL) Uprate [Exempted Development] Counties Galway and Clare**

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended (the 'Regulations'), EirGrid has undertaken Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and the Conservation Objectives of relevant European sites, whether CP1310 Agannygal-Ennis 110kV Overhead Line (OHL) Uprate [Exempted Development] (the 'Development') individually or in-combination with other plans or projects will result in likely significant effects on a European site(s).

The extent of the works associated with the Development are as follows:

- replacement of existing 200mm<sup>2</sup> ACSR "Wolf" with 430mm<sup>2</sup> ACSR "Bison" conductor;
- 95 no. polesets to be replaced, 82 no. polesets to be retained;
- 66 no. crossarms to be replaced, 111 no. to be retained;
- retain towers at 6 no. locations, with bar member replacement at 5 no. locations;
- replace towers at 15 no. locations;
- installation of fibre wrap/OPPC on one phase;
- replace vibration dampers at all locations;
- replace suspension clamps at all locations;
- re-plumb poles at 9 no. locations;
- replace pole bolts at 5 no. locations;
- all hardware and insulators to be replaced as part of the 430mm<sup>2</sup> "Bison" uprate;
- new line identification labels and danger notices are to be installed at all locations; and
- bay equipment replacement and associated work in Ennis 110 kV substation.

As discussed in more detail below, all works associated with the Development (with the exception of the works within Ennis substation) will be restricted to taking place during the period September to March, inclusive.

### **Analysis of Pathways to European sites**

Between poleset 162 (towards the southern end of the Development) and Agannygal Station (at the northern end), the Development passes through (going in and out, in places) Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA (site code 004168<sup>1</sup>). Agannygal Station itself lies within the SPA boundary. The Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species of the site are breeding hen harrier *Circus cyaneus* and breeding merlin *Falco columbarius*. According to published research<sup>2</sup>, disturbance of breeding hen harrier could occur at distances of up to between 300-750m of an active nest, while for merlin this distance is considered to be between 300-500m. The breeding season for these species is generally between April and August, inclusive. All works associated with the Development (with the exception of the works within Ennis substation) will be restricted to taking place during the period September to March, inclusive. At these times, hen harrier or

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<sup>1</sup> NPWS (2022). Conservation Objectives: Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA 004168. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>2</sup> Goodship, N.M. and Furness, R.W. (2022). Disturbance Distances Review. An updated literature review of disturbance distances of selected bird species. NatureScot Research Report 1283.

merlin, if present, would be very unlikely to be breeding. Consequently, impacts on breeding hen harrier and merlin will be avoided and likely significant effects are therefore excluded.

Works associated with the Development will be temporary and impacted habitat will be reinstated to its prior condition quickly following completion. As the Development involves the uprating of an existing OHL, areas of permanent habitat loss will be extremely small, and limited to, for example, foundations for new towers. These losses will be so small as to have no effect on the availability of foraging resource to SCI hen harrier or merlin.

The Lesser Horseshoe Bat Species Action Plan<sup>3</sup> estimates that presence of suitable commuting and foraging habitat within at least 2.5km of a roost is important for the success of a maternity colony. According to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)<sup>4</sup>, some researchers have also found that lesser horseshoe bats *Rhinolophus hipposideros* normally forage in woodlands/scrub within 2.5km of their roosts<sup>5</sup>. There are two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated for lesser horseshoe bat within 2.5km of the Development:

- Old Domestic Buildings, Rylane SAC (site code 002314<sup>6</sup>), located approximately 1.9km east of poleset 169; and,
- Lough Cutra SAC (site code 000299<sup>7</sup>), located approximately 2.1km north-west of poleset 84.

Vegetation clearance will be required at three poleset locations within 2.5km of Lough Cutra SAC (80, 86 and 87). These are small areas of scrub lying within larger areas of such habitat. The loss of these areas of vegetation will not interrupt any linear features which could be important for commuting, and the areas that will be lost are so small that impacts on availability of foraging resource will be negligible. A single poleset (169) lying within 2.5km of Old Domestic Buildings, Rylane SAC will require vegetation removal. This poleset lies in a hedgerow/treeline, and will require some clearance to enable works. Poleset 169 is approximately 1.9km from the SAC, and therefore towards the upper limit of the core foraging zone for QI lesser horseshoe bats. This location lies within a landscape of small fields with hedgerows/treelines ubiquitous. The loss of a very small section of hedgerow, at distance from the SAC, is unlikely to significantly affect the commuting/foraging behaviour or resource for QI lesser horseshoe bat associated with Old Domestic Buildings, Rylane SAC. No permanent lighting will be installed as part of the Development, and any which is required for construction will be used in restricted locations for short periods of time only. Likely significant effects on foraging/commuting QI lesser horseshoe bats are therefore excluded.

Both SACs for which lesser horseshoe bats are a QI are located sufficiently distant from the Development that there is no possibility of disturbance of any roosts within them.

The closest SAC to the Development is Gortnacarnaun Wood SAC (site code 002180<sup>8</sup>), approximately 690m to the north, and designated for the QI habitat old sessile oak woods. This is beyond the distance at which any impacts on groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems could occur, or impacts from airborne pollution. Likely significant effects from these impact sources are therefore excluded for this and all other sites with habitats as QI.

The Development transverses over numerous watercourses. However, there will be no works in or immediately adjacent to any of these. Furthermore, the works are of a nature which means that significant waterborne pollution events cannot occur; for example, no large excavations are required which could result in substantial volumes of sediment being generated. Lower

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<sup>3</sup> NPWS and VWT (2022). Lesser Horseshoe Bat Species Action Plan 2022-2026. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>4</sup> NPWS (2018). Conservation objectives supporting document – lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*). Version 1. Conservation Objectives Supporting Document Series. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>5</sup> Bontadina, F., Schofield, H. and Naef-Daenzer, B. (2002). Radio-tracking reveals that lesser horseshoe bats (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) forage in woodland. Journal of Zoology 258, pp 281-290.

<sup>6</sup> NPWS (2018). Old Domestic Buildings, Rylane SAC 002314. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>7</sup> NPWS (2018). Conservation Objectives: Lough Cutra SAC 000299. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>8</sup> NPWS (2021). Conservation Objectives: Gortnacarnaun Wood SAC 002180. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

River Shannon SAC (site code 002165<sup>9</sup>) is the only SAC connected downstream of the Development and is designated for aquatic QI habitats and species. River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (site code 004077<sup>10</sup>) is also located downstream and supports bird species which rely on habitats covered at times by water, and includes the SCI wetland habitat. Lower River Shannon SAC is approximately 1.3km from the Development ('as the crow flies'; and even further following the course of hydrological connection), while River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA is approximately 5.0km distant (again, 'as the crow flies'). Considering these distances (and dilution effects that would occur) and the low likelihood of waterborne pollution being generated by the Development, likely significant effects from this impact source are excluded.

Although the Development passes over watercourses (where the OHL oversails these features), works will be carried out away from waterbodies and not directly adjacent to them. The works associated with the Development are relatively minor in nature and not of a type that could cause significant disturbance of aquatic species, including fish (for example, no piling works are required). Works will be temporary, taking place at any given location over a short period of time. Given, therefore, that works will be set back from watercourses, will be temporary and short-term, and minor in nature, likely significant effects on aquatic QI species as a result of disturbance are excluded.

According to published research<sup>11</sup>, the maximum distance to which non-breeding bird species for which SPAs are designated will typically travel to forage is 20km from the boundary of such a site. There are seven SPAs designated for non-breeding SCI bird species located within 20km of the Development (listed in order of increasing distance):

- Lough Cutra SPA (site code 004056<sup>12</sup>), located approximate 2.5km north;
- Ballyallia Lough SPA (site code 004041<sup>13</sup>, located approximately 2.7km west-north-west;
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA, located approximately 5.0km south-south-west;
- Coole-Garryland SPA (site code 004107<sup>14</sup>, located approximately 8.6km north-west;
- Corofin Wetlands SPA (site code 004220<sup>15</sup>), located approximately 10.5km west-north-west;
- Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (site code 004058<sup>16</sup>), located approximately 13.6km south-west; and,
- Lough Rea SPA (site code 004134<sup>17</sup>), located approximately 15.7km north.

As stated above, the works associated with the Development will be temporary and take place in any one location for a short period of time only. They are also relatively minor in nature, and not substantially different to routine agricultural activities, for example. Considering this and the huge areas of alternative foraging habitat which would remain available to SCI birds of all of these sites, likely significant effects as a result of disturbance are excluded.

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<sup>9</sup> NPWS (2012). Conservation Objectives: Lower River Shannon SAC 002165. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>10</sup> NPWS (2012). Conservation Objectives: River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA 004077. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>11</sup> SNH (2016). Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Version 3 – June 2016.

<sup>12</sup> NPWS (2025). Conservation Objectives: Lough Cutra SPA 004056. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>13</sup> NPWS (2025). Conservation Objectives: Ballyallia Lough SPA 004041. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>14</sup> NPWS (2025). Conservation Objectives: Coole-Garryland SPA 004107. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>15</sup> NPWS (2025). Conservation Objectives: Corofin Wetlands SPA 004220. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>16</sup> NPWS (2024). Conservation Objectives: Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA 004058. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>17</sup> NPWS (2025). Conservation Objectives: Lough Rea SPA 004134. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the Development via a source-pathway-receptor link, that may result in likely significant effects in view of the applicable site Conservation Objectives.

The impacts of the Development itself are small and will occur over a short period of time such that there is no possibility of the impacts of other projects or plans acting in-combination to give rise to likely significant effects on any European sites.

#### **AA Screening Statement**

In accordance with Regulation 42(7) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 SI 477 as amended, EirGrid has made a Determination following Screening that an Appropriate Assessment is not required as the project individually or in-combination with other plans or projects is not likely to have a significant effect on any European sites. The risk of likely significant effects on European sites can be excluded on the basis of objective evidence.

This Determination is based on the location, scale, extent and duration of the Development, including temporary works, and has not taken account of measures intended to avoid or reduce significant effects on European sites.

Signed:



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27 August 2025